



MENOMINEE INDIAN TRIBE OF WISCONSIN

P.O. Box 910
Keshena, WI 54135-0910

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 27, 2012

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
Craig Corn, Chairman
(715)799-5114

The Sacred Nama'o (sturgeon) return to the Menominee Nation

(Keshena, WI) – On Wednesday, March 21, 2012, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources delivered 32 Sturgeon, as part of the ongoing effort to return the sacred Sturgeon to their ancestral spawning grounds located on the Wolf River at Keshena Falls, Keshena WI. The Sturgeon were harvested from on the Wolf River, near Shawano area and transported to the release site at Chickeney Creek, near the Keshena Falls. The Sturgeon spawning season does not usually occur in Wisconsin until mid-April. However, the unseasonably warm weather has resulted in an earlier spawning season for 2012.

The Spring transfer is just one of a ten year process, which will return over 100 Sturgeon annually to the Wolf River on the Menominee Indian Reservation. During this transfer, the DNR carefully deposited the diverse population that ranged in size, age, and sex. Of this population, the largest to be delivered was a female measuring 74.1 inches and weighing over 150 lbs. All sturgeon were equipped with identification tags, however six Sturgeon were implanted with ten-year sonic tags. The sonic tags allow fish biologists to track the migration patterns of the sturgeon. Many of the sturgeon will likely pass through the dams to the south, but the goal is to create a sustaining population on the Menominee Reservation.

To that end, the Tribe has fishing regulations established that prohibit any person from harvesting Sturgeon on the Wolf River. Enrolled Menominee's may only harvest sturgeon on Legend Lake, which is separated from the Wolf River by an impoundment. The penalty for illegal harvest of Sturgeon on any water body, with the exception of Legend Lake, is punishable by a 1,000 dollar fine.

The Sturgeon is an aboriginal source of sustenance and spirituality for the Menominee people and a clan symbol of the Tribe. The annual spring return of the sturgeon symbolizes the return to abundance to the Menominee, after the long hard winter. Historically, when the water is high from the ice thaw, the sturgeon are called home by the sound of the drum beat, which is made from a large circular underwater rock formation near Keshena Falls, states Tribal Historian, David "Nahwahquaw" Grignon. These essential elements of Menominee culture were halted for 100 years following the construction of the 1892 dam at Shawano, and later by the 1926 Dam at Balsam Row. In 1992, the Menominee people revived the sturgeon ceremonies with the assistance of the DNR. In celebration of Namao's return, the Menominee Historic Preservation Department will hold the Annual Sturgeon Feast & Pow-Wow on Saturday, April 21, 2012 at the Menominee Indian High School.

For more information, please contact Craig Corn, Tribal Chairman, at (715)799-5114 or cacorn@mitw.org. For information on the Sturgeon Feast & Pow-Wow, contact Historic Preservation at (715)799-5258 and for information regarding Tribal Fishing Regulations, contact Conservation at (715)799-5116.

###